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ECCLESIASTIC LOVE IN EVANGELISATION

Summary: Evangelisation is an important part of the Church's mission and its aim is to bring man to meet with God the Saviour. Preaching the Gospel cannot be reduced to words, but it requires testimony in the form of deeds. Acts of love, for which the best source is the conduct of Jesus, described in the Gospels, are the most credible. The Church not only tries to imitate Jesus, but also to make Him present in God's words that it preaches and in the ministry of charity. The truth of His infinite love is the most important truth that it communicates to the faithful. Therefore, evangelisation is always a form of communicating God's love. The testimony of the faith in Christ, confirmed by acts of love, is extremely convincing and clear. Therefore, evangelical activities of the Church must always include Christian caritas, i.e. ministration to the needy.

Keywords: love, caritas, evangelisation, testimony of faith, preaching.

The need for the meaning of life and for love is one of the greatest and permanent human needs. By taking up evangelisation, the Church tries to respond to those deepest desires. However, the question arises: how to find a way to preach Divine love so that it can reach the human heart? The point is that such actions should be taken which would make the Gospel an event of encountering the living God. Considering the whole experience of the Church and what the contemporary world requires, it becomes clear that evangelisation cannot be reduced to verbal communication, but it must be supported with conduct reflecting the life of Christ, because a testimony without words is of paramount importance in evangelisation. A deed is always the first testimony before the world; its value also lies in that it is self-interpreting. (Cf. Hajduk 2013, p. 21) Therefore, one cannot talk of true evangelisation without specific deeds of love, i.e. Christian caritas.

The aim of this study on the place of Caritas in evangelisation is to identify the pastoral aspects linked to the ministry of caritas in the Church, which are important in the formulation of the theological assumptions of apologetics in

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evangelisation activities in the modern world. Contemporary teaching of the Church combines the two theological issues: love and evangelisation. Therefore, there is a need for seeking a correlation between them. Pursuing the research objective focuses on presenting the theological and pastoral approach to the “ecclesiastic love” (Parzych-Blakiewicz 2013a) as the fundamental category of the functioning of the teaching and serving Church, based on modern papal teaching.

1. Evangelisation as the communication of God’s love

Evangelisation is one of the fundamental and topical tasks of the Church. An authentic experience of the living God is the kind of good which should always be shared, as it helps man to change his heart and life permanently. It is a grace which the recipient should not keep to himself, but which he can and should share with others. (Cf. EGen, n. 1) It is important that – when reaching out to a man with this key message – the Church should take into account the constantly changing reality and seek new ways of preaching the Gospel. (Cf. EGen, n. 11) It is beyond doubt that Christ is the chief paragon in the Gospel, as He preached it with words *and deeds*. (Cf. Synod of Bishops 2011, p. 10–11) Being the first and the ultimate paragon of evangelisation, in a sense of actions whose aim was to start the faith, He impersonated the Divine Kingdom by his words, deeds and by His person. (Cf. Murawski 1992, p. 185) Meeting in love was the most important principle of evangelisation employed by Christ. Because every meeting with Him carried with it the experience of love. People felt that Christ loved them, which made them follow Him, although sometimes they were hungry and they had nothing to eat. (Cf. ENen, n. 7, 9)

The meetings with Christ as described in the Gospels show the great desire for love, which is present in each human heart. By His actions and deeds, Christ helped people to discover that everyone is loved to the end and is desired by this love, no matter what happens. (Cf. SpSen, n. 3) In light of this love, the man can accept his life, which is fulfilled by maturing in love to its fullness manifested by Christ in His death on the cross. (Cf. DCEen, n. 12) Not only does God love man, but in His love, gives man the grace for overcoming weaknesses that caused his infidelity to God. God’s mercy shows the passion of God’s desire to help man to achieve the fullness of life for which he was created. Man can find it in the ultimate union with God in the communion of the Holy Trinity. Ultimately, the nature of this passionate love manifests itself in the Incarnation and in the cross of Christ who suffers so that it is possible to achieve this fullness. (Cf. DCEen, n. 10)

Human love usually requires catharsis, and God's Son shows the way through which it must pass so that the process can be completed successfully. If it is to become the way leading to high levels of humanity, it must open to Christ and pass through His humility and imitate His humbleness. True love always includes elevation to God, whose love remains the ideal and its vastness is its measure. Love of God is not abstract, it is not reduced to communication; it is not only an ideal which inspires human behaviour. Love of God manifested itself to people, i.e. it became visible because God sent his only born Son into the world that we might live through him. (Cf. 1 Jn 4:9; cf. DCEen, n. 17) Descending to people with His love, God tries to move man to love and shows in His Son how to imitate His love. (Cf. Sherwin, 2007, p. 385)

Christ showed many times that the love to which He led people was not only a feeling, but concrete actions taken in specific situations. The love of God and the love of another person is manifested as one: "we meet Christ in the smallest of men and we meet God in Christ." (DCEen, n. 15) By responding to God's love, man turns to God, but also, together with God, he turns to man. What is more, man's love for other people helps to verify his love for God, because *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.* (1 Jn 4:20) The love shown to one's brothers is a way of meeting God and closing one's eyes to one's brother makes one also blind to God. (Cf. DCEen, n. 16)

Leading people to the experience of Divine love, started by Christ, is continued by the Church, for which evangelisation is always the fundamental task. (AG, n. 35) When carrying out its evangelical activities, the Church – like Jesus – tries not just to get across some ideas or expand man's knowledge of God, but rather to help man to meet Jesus, Who puts one's life in a new perspective and sets a decisive direction. (Benedict XVI 2010) Because man will not be saved by any phrase – even from the catechism – but by the true person of Jesus Christ and the certainty that He gives us: *I am with you!* (Mt 28:20; cf. John Paul II 2001, n. 29) Therefore, the world is entitled to have this Gospel: God loves you today, Jesus Christ has come to you. (Cf. John Paul II 1988, n. 34) Every man should hear this Gospel as addressed to him personally, because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Cf. (Rom 10:17)

Proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ – kerygma – plays a special role in the evangelical activities of the Church, especially in the context of communicating God's love. The word "kerygma" and the verb "keryssein" derived from it "to proclaim solemnly, like a herald, the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ". (Jankowski 1989, p. 5–6) It concerns the first message in the Church – that of Divine love for man, which God manifested in Jesus Christ

– His torment, death and resurrection. Christ is still alive and acts within the community of the Church. This truth is the first that should always be present in the Church's preaching. The point is not only the sequence, but also the qualitative importance of the truths that are preached. Kerygma is the first in the qualitative sense, because it is the most important message, to which one must return and listen to in a variety of ways. (Siwek 2011, p. 120–121) According to Pope Francis: "we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the centre of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal." (EG, n. 164)

Apostolic kerygma, in a pedagogical approach, with a coherent presentation of the Divine plan for human salvation, contains several issues¹. However, preaching Divine love is always the first and foremost of them. Because salvation stems from the love of God, Who took the initiative. (Cf. 1 Jn 4:8b; Isa 54:10; 49:15-16; 1 Jn 4,19; Eph 3:20) The Church preaches the merciful love of God in all circumstances, especially in the face of difficulties. A simple sentence: *God loves you*, has special power, when it is pronounced by someone who lives by it. God is the loving Father. God is love; He loves personally, faithfully, unconditionally and He does it today. By kerygma, the Church invites the listener to agree to being given the love of God and to recognise the need for such love by asking for it. No one and nothing can separate man from this love: God remains faithful despite man's unfaithfulness. (Cf. Rom 8:35-39) The exceptional love of God appears before apprehensive people, when He sends His Son to sinners so that, by His blood being spilled on the cross, He released them from their sins and restored the lost dignity of God's children. (Królikowski 2014, p. 17–21)

The experience of community plays an invaluable role in leading people to the experience of God's love. Evangelisation does not address a person seen as an individual, but a person seen in relation to others. Therefore, the community of faith should be the starting point. (Boff 1990, p. 80) God attracts man to Himself, considering a complex network of human relations, which the life in a human community involves. (EG, n. 113) Developing mature ecclesiastic communities favours the faith of their members becoming manifest in all their original meaning, i.e. as adhering to the person of Jesus Christ and His gospel and as meeting and creating the sacramental communion with Christ through life in the spirit of love and ministration. (Cf John Paul II 1988, n. 34) Evangelisation opens to the process of creating a true ecclesiastic community. The process involves transformation of mass Christianity, based on anonymous relations, without cooperation for the benefit of the community, to a community with the

¹ These are: love of God; sin; salvation in Christ; faith and repentance; Holy Spirit; community. (Cf. Goliszek 2004, p. 139–184)

binding force being not some organisation factors, but deep interpersonal relations, focused around the values accompanied by the practice of Christian life. (Boff 1990, p. 81)

Preaching the Gospel and leading people to the experience of God's transformative love is fruitful, especially when its protagonists are authentic witnesses of faith in God. A true evangeliser, i.e. a harbinger of the Gospel, can be any baptised person, who has encountered Jesus Christ in their life, experienced His selfless love, received Him as the Lord and Saviour and lives by Christian values. An evangeliser is a witness of Divine love, which he has experienced himself and which he wants to share with others. Pope Francis notes that our times set new challenges before evangelisers, which is why he claims that these must be evangelisers with the Spirit. (Cf. EG, n. 15) Their power and unswerving attitude must be based on prayer and work. Therefore, people are needed who experience constant heart formation. The role of prayer is indispensable as it deepens the bond with God and, at the same time, protects against the diminishing of passion for evangelisation because of the obstacles encountered. In their actions, an evangeliser must watch out for a temptation of the spirituality focused on internal, individual experiences, which would be hard to reconcile with the requirements of charity and with the logic of the Incarnation. (Cf. EG, n. 262) Therefore, it is important that evangelisers should be close to recipients through the circles they come from and through their everyday work. Therefore, lay people are indispensable in the evangelical mission of the Church as the testimony of their everyday lives is an invaluable asset.

2. Testimony of love and preaching the Gospel

Contemporary man is more willing to listen to witnesses than to teachers. Therefore, the testimony of Christian life, i.e. life stemming from faith, hope and charity, is the first and main way of evangelisation in the Church. (Cf. ENen, n. 41) Because only someone who himself experiences God, i.e. remains in a permanent communion with God, can preach the Gospel in an authentic way. (Cf. Pawlina 1997, p. 251) Meeting and experiencing God creates an obligation to bear witness to the world of the great Divine acts performed out of love for man: *Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* (1 Cor 9:16) Evangelisation is conducted through good deeds especially among people who do not know God, so *they may see your deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.* (1 P 2:12; cf. Kochel 2001, p. 30)

The conduct of love is an authentic testimony of the bond to God, which proves to be universal and most convincing. Demonstrated towards those in

need, love is the kind of testimony, which is understandable to all: *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* (Jn 13:35) A true evangeliser is one who first loves with the love that Jesus Christ teaches us; only then does he preach. It is a principle which applies to all evangelisers: parents, priests, teachers and all formative groups. This truth can be easily seen in the family, where the parents are the first evangelisers to their child. If they do it well, they will first become witnesses of Divine love for the child. By this, they will create a chance for the child to receive God's truth with joy. (AG, n. 42)

Brotherly love practiced in the Church cannot be associated with any potential benefits. Its only motive is the love of God and His commandment to love one's brother. Love is a gift to one's brother who has his sacred dignity. It is also always a continuation of what God does to people. The love shown by Christians to their brothers is always a testimony to Christ. When the man offers his services to his brother, it is a testimony of God's love. "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak." (DCEen, n. 31) However, for actions taken within the Church to express true love, they have to stem from the love animated by the meeting with Christ. Only when love fills the hearts of believers can they follow Christ's footsteps, striving to live not for themselves, but for God, because of God, for their brothers. (Cf. DCEen, n. 33)

Talking about brotherly love as a valuable way of bearing witness to God's love in Church one cannot limit it to the sphere of personal responsibility. The Christian community in Jerusalem felt responsible for the ministry of love from the very beginning of the Church existence. Because although "brotherly love rooted in God's love is mainly the obligation of every believer, it is also the task before the whole ecclesiastic community at every level: from the local community through a particular Church to the global Church. The Church as a community should also put love to practice. (Cf. DCEen, n. 20) The ecclesiastic *communio* – Christian brotherhood is a source of obligation towards one's brothers, whose implementation has the following forms: 1) missionary activities, 2) *agape* or charity activities, and 3) surrogate suffering because of those non-baptised, like the Master did. *Agape* is realised in two ways. First, it is about relations between Christians, which should draw attention and conduct evangelisation activities in the surrounding community. It is also about ministry to the Lord, who is present in every man who needs help. (Cf. Mt 25:31-46; cf. Twomey 2008, p. 6)

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI noted that the Church as community must practice active love. What is more, the love is not only a casual, spontaneous manifestation of charity, but an "orderly ministration",

which is the act of the community. The Church is bound to provide diakonia, which is the ministration of love provided in an orderly manner in the community. (Cf. DCEen, n. 20–21) The Church service – diakonia – develops with devotion to preaching God’s words (kerygma – martyria) and administering sacraments (liturgy), so the three gestures make up its “three-fold responsibility”. (DCEen, n. 25)

If Christianity is to be a trustworthy religion, it needs something more than just having a suitable theory. It is about interaction of theory and action, from which Christianity drew its power to win over people. It means that each attempt to convince the world about the truth of Christianity must be based equally on theory and practice and its essence, at its deepest level, will comprise love and reason joined as two pillars of reality: the true reason for Christianity is love, and love is the reality of the truth. In its unity, they are true basis and aim of the whole activity of the Church. Christian activity as agape is, in its essence, subordinated to orthodoxy, because this is where the truth about God manifests itself fully. (Cf. Twomey 2008, p. 6)

3. Caritas in evangelical activities of the Church

Charity is an important element of the Church’s mission and it is part of one of its three main functions: pastoral love, called Christian diakonia by Vaticanum II. (Mikrut 2001, p. 166) According to Benedict XVI, charity as practicing love actively is part of the essence of the Church’s mission in the same way as administering sacraments and preaching the Gospel. (Cf. DCEen, n. 22). Participation in the Eucharist and common prayer should lead believers to love, unity and mutual care for one another. (Cf. LG, n. 11) Pope Francis reminded us that it is the ordinance and mission of the laity “to transform various earthly realities so that all human activity should be transformed by the Gospel”. However, no one can be released from the obligation to care for the poor and about social justice: “Spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbour, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone.” (EGen, n. 201)

Love demonstrated not only with words, but also with deeds, is a commandment which Jesus gave to his disciples during the Last Supper. (Cf. Jn 13:35) Charity rooted in the commandment of love is the right and obligation of God’s People; therefore, it should encompass all people and cater for all their needs. (Cf. AA, n. 8) Belonging to the community of the Church involves engagement in deeds of charity towards people who suffer from various forms of suffering and poverty. A gesture of charity is never a unilateral process. When

everything seems to indicate that one party only gives and the other only receives, in fact the first party is also a receiving one. (Cf. DiM, n. 14)

The Church tries to provide help in various areas of human poverty. Caring about the salvation of the faithful and overcoming spiritual poverty seem to be the most important in this ministration, but sometimes, the only way to a man's spiritual healing is to satisfy his fundamental existential needs. "Wherever there are people in need of food and drink, clothing, housing, medicine, employment, education; wherever men lack the facilities necessary for living a truly human life or are afflicted with serious distress or illness or suffer exile or imprisonment, there Christian charity should seek them out and find them, console them with great solicitude, and help them with appropriate relief". (AA, n. 8)

Regarding the charitable ministration of the Church, it must be borne in mind that there is a special place for the poor in God's heart because He became poor in Jesus Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor 8:9) An analysis of the life of Jesus described in the Gospels shows that poverty became His way, which He took to bring the joy of the Gospel to the poor: *The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor.* (Lk 4:18) He assured those suffering and poor that God has them in His heart: *Blessed are you who are poor; for yours is the kingdom of God.* (Lk 6:20) Jesus directly identified Himself with the poor: *For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat* (Mt 25:35) and taught that charity towards them is the key to heaven. (Cf. EGen, n. 197)

Inspired by the example of Christ, the Church takes the side of the poor, which it understands as a special form of precedence in practicing Christian charity. It is certified by the whole tradition of the Church and is included in the Christological faith in God, Who became poor for us (cf. EGen, n. 198) and, therefore, Who is the first to become engaged totally on the side of the poor. (Cf. Weber 1995, p. 103) The preferential option for the poor makes preaching the Gospel – which is, after all, the first commandment of charity – potentially better understandable and prevents it from being drowned in the flood of words with which the media inundate us. (Cf. EGen, n. 199)

According to Pope Francis, the poor are not only a group to which special aid is provided, but they can also teach us a lot. Since they know Christ's suffering because they suffer themselves, they can effectively evangelise the ecclesiastic community. The Church is invited to recognise the redemptive power of the existence of the poor and to put them in the centre of its way. The community of the faithful is invited to discover Christ in them, to let them speak about their issues and to be their friends, to listen to them, understand them and to accept the mysterious wisdom that God wants to show us through them. (Cf. EGen, n. 198) The point is that the poor should be appreciated with their goodness, their way of life, their culture and their way of experiencing the faith.

Helping the poor requires authentic love, it is always contemplative and it allows the ministering to another person not out of necessity or vanity. It seeks real and heartfelt closeness, thanks to which a poor person can experience liberation. It must also be noted that the majority of the poor are particularly open to the faith, they have the need for God, which is why the Church should offer them His friendship and blessing. The gift of the Word, sacraments and the proposition of the way of development and growing to maturity in faith must not be missing. (Cf. EGen, n. 200) The Gospel also gives sense to life when one's existence seems worthless. True evangelisation sheds light on human life and enriches it, when it liberates one from existential fears, uncovers the sense of human existence and shows opportunities for cooperation for the common good. (Cf Boff 1990, p. 72–73)

While trying to imitate Jesus the evangeliser, Who identified Himself with the poor, the Church should open itself to new forms of poverty and weakness, in which it can see the suffering Christ. The number of groups on the margin of civilisation in the contemporary world, which suffer from different forms of oppression, is growing. The most needy include the homeless, drug addicts, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly, migrants, victims of human trafficking, women susceptible to exclusion and unborn children. (Cf. EGen, n. 209–214)

In the face of such complex forms of poverty, the aid provided by the Church cannot be based solely on the deeds of individual Christians. As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, if the Church wants to find the way to all the needy, it must undertake a social service based on activities of adequate organisations and institutions which are capable of providing aid to people in need. (Cf. DCEen, n. 20) Christian *caritas* requires active conduct from members of the Church; (Parzych-Blakiewicz 2013b, p. 99–100) they must be open to other people, demonstrate social sensitivity and the ability to recognise the true needs of contemporary people. (Cf. DCEen, n. 31)

People who minister to the needy in the Church should not be inspired by ideologies of making the world a better place, but they should be motivated by the faith, which acts through love. The Church conducts its evangelisation through the testimony of love, borne by people affected by Christ's love, Whose hearth Christ won over by His love, inspiring brotherly love in them. (Cf. DCEen, n. 33) Whoever loves Christ, also loves the Church and wishes the Church to be the tool of love which emanates from Him. A properly formed associate of a Catholic charitable organisation should work in unity with the Church, so that the love of God should become increasingly widespread in the world. By magnanimously showing their love to the needy, Christians bear witness to the presence of God in the world. Whoever provides help to others because of Christ will find out with time that it is a grace. (Parzych-Blakiewicz

2017, p. 295–296) “We recognize that we are not acting on the basis of any superiority or greater personal efficiency, but because the Lord has graciously enabled us to do so.” (DCEen, n. 35) He passes on to others the love with which he was enriched by God so that he could pass it on to others.

Summation

Brotherly love, rooted in God’s love, is a permanent task for everyone individually and for the whole ecclesiastic community. Contemporary teaching of the Church emphasises the issue of evangelisation linked to the aspect of love and charity. Caritas – as ecclesiastic love – is regarded as one of the main elements which supports the authority of the Catholic Church in the world. For this reason, the traditional concept of caritas used in regard to the love that the institutional Church shows to man in different areas of its activities should be made more specific by adding an adjective applying directly to the essence of the Church. “Ecclesiastic love” denotes clearly Christian love – caritas – in the context of the modern teaching of the Church on evangelisation, especially during the pontificates of Benedict XVI and Francis. Brotherly love requires constant commitment from those believing in Christ. Love – *caritas* will also be necessary, even in the most just community. It is of great importance to the evangelical activity of the Church because it becomes a concrete manifestation of the Gospel. Translating God’s words to specific acts of love adds credibility to preaching the Gospels. Therefore, efforts aimed at using such forms of caritas, which will respond to the specific needs of the poor and a testimony of belonging to Christ, must not be missing from the evangelical activities of the Church.

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MIŁOŚĆ EKLEZJALNA W EWANGELIZACJI

Streszczenie: Ewangelizacja jest istotną częścią misji Kościoła i ma na celu doprowadzenie człowieka do spotkania z Bogiem, który zbawia. Głoszenie Dobrej Nowiny nie może się jednak ograniczać wyłącznie do słów, ale wymaga świadectwa w postaci czynów. Najbardziej wiarygodne są czyny miłości, które najpełniejszy wzór znajdują w postawie Jezusa opisanej na kartach Ewangelii. Kościół stara się nie tylko naśladować Jezusa ale także uobecnić Go w głoszonym słowie Bożym, sakramentach, a także posłudze charytatywnej. Najważniejszą prawdą jaką ma do przekazania o Bogu, jest prawda o Jego nieskończonej miłości. Stąd ewangelizacja jest zawsze pewną formą komunikowania miłości Bożej. Niezwykle czytelne i przekonujące jest przede wszystkim świadectwo wiary w Chrystusa potwierdzone poprzez czyny miłości. Stąd w działaniach ewangelizacyjnych Kościoła zawsze winno się znajdować miejsce na *caritas* chrześcijańska, czyli posługę wobec potrzebujących.

Słowa kluczowe: miłość, *caritas*, ewangelizacja, świadectwo wiary, przepowiadanie.